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A NIGHT IN THE TOMBS.

IN TWO PARTS.—PART I.

It was a pleasant day for all on board the *Tien-sin*, when the first great 'chop,' filled with the new season's tea, came floating down the river, and dropped across our bows. All hands clustered on the rail, and looked eagerly on, as the unwieldy craft bobbed and bumped against the black side of the old ship. But the 'Fukees,' as we called the Chinamen, knew what they were at; and so, after a great deal of shouting and jumping about, the toothless old skipper left his great steering-ear in the high-peaked stern, and the clumsy barge swung quietly alongside.

The *Tien-sin* had been lying at Whampoa for more than two months, waiting for the new teas; several other ships were there also on the same errand, while their captains were up at Canton, making what bargains they could with the merchants. Meanwhile, our paint fell off in large round blisters; our copper grew slimy with the yellow mud that was ever washing against it; our cables were twisted into as many turns as a lady's watch-chain; and our rigging looked rusty and untidy. On board, all was clean and neat. The mate had been left in charge when the skipper went away; but he and over half the men had since gone ashore to the hospital, sick of the fever, many of them destined never to leave it alive. I was the second-mate, and so the charge of the ship had fallen on me.

After the 'holds' and 'tween decks' had been swept out, and the 'dunnage' laid down, there was little or no work to be done. The carpenter now and then kept up a feeble hammering in the saloon, which was to be filled with tea; and the 'bosun' made some forlorn attempts with the 'spinning-winch;' as for the men, any that chose might go ashore, one watch at a time; but they seldom availed themselves of the privilege, so few inducements does Whampoa offer. Of course, being my own master, I could do as I liked; and almost every evening, leaving the bosun in charge, I used to

paddle ashore in the punt, and stroll away towards the country. My companion was a youngster, an apprentice named George Thompson, more often called 'Georgie;' a tiny little fellow, with big wondering blue eyes, and a spirit such as boys only have. Brave, active, and daring even to rashness, he was the pet and favourite of all on board; and being, with the exception of the captain and mate, the only one of my own position, I was naturally glad to make him a companion.

Silver-town, as the principal part of Whampoa is called, lies on an island formed by two forks of the river, and has but few attractions beyond wine-shops and liquor-stores; so we seldom went there, but chose the opposite side. Here, after passing through a labyrinth of huts and small shops, built round the graving-dock, you got out into the open country, with hills and valleys studded with timber, and pretty villages peeping out of clumps of trees. The roads were good, the scenery was soft and pleasing, the natives civil and unobtrusive; and the whole was such a change from the dull monotony of the ship, that nearly every evening found Georgie and myself there.

Meanwhile, the *Tien-sin* was rapidly filling; chest after chest was passed up, and slid down into the hold. The old Fukee, with his bundle of red sticks, might have grown to the deck, so immovable was he. Every chest that came up had one of these sticks on it; these it was his business to collect, and compare at the end of the day with his friend in the chop, when the correct 'tally' of the number of chests delivered was obtained. In the hold, the 'compradore' presided over some twenty stalwart and half-naked coolies, who seized the chests as they slid down, and stowed them in their places. The men were employed bending sails, and getting up the 'running' gear. All was hurry and bustle. The captain was still away, and my leisure was consequently much reduced; still, after the 'hands' knocked off, I generally found time to go ashore, and take a stroll in the old direction. One evening, the last chop did not come in time to begin discharging, so I was able to

get away a little earlier than usual. Taking Georgie with me, I told the bosun to look out for me, and jumping into the punt, paddled ashore; then fastening her to the steps of the dock, we left her till our return, and were soon past the dirty village, out in the open country.

There was a village some four miles away, which we had often said we would explore, but by one thing or another had been prevented; this, Georgie now proposed we should walk to. As the sun was still up, and we had plenty of daylight before us, I saw no objection, and we started off. The road wound in and out amongst the rice-fields, past the English graveyard, with its solemn reminders of many a lost friend, and came out into a long broad valley, lying between two rounded hills. Here and there were the graves of dead Fukees, circular places cut in the hillside so as to form a courtyard in front of the tomb, usually placed in an excavation behind. Over these places, long strips of red and gilt paper fluttered mournfully, the passing gifts of friends or relatives. Gangs of labourers met us at every turn, passing us in a long swinging trot; the water trickled soothingly from the marshy rice-ground, in tiny sparkling rills, attracting flocks of paddy-birds, and waders of every kind, their white and gray plumage checkering the bright rice, and affording a warning to the frogs they coveted. The sun was setting when we entered the village, and I wished to turn back; but Georgie begged so eagerly for a peep at it that I had not the heart to refuse, and so we went on. The houses were of the regular Chinese pattern, made familiar to us from childhood by the 'willow' plates, with pointed overhanging eaves, and gables at the corners.

The village was larger than we had anticipated, and ere we had gone many hundred yards, I half resolved to turn back; but Georgie was so anxious to see what was there, and reminded me with such a serious face of my promise, that I gave in, and we went on. The people were busy closing their shops, and placing their beds out in the street ready for the night. No one seemed to notice us more than usual; indeed, foreigners have so long made Whampoa and its neighbourhood their resort, that, had they done so, it would have been remarkable. An open door with a good light within now attracted us; it was one of the many gaming-houses that swarm in every Chinese town and village. I had often been in them. The scene is curious, and has but slight temptations to offer, a few dollars being the visible extent of the 'bank.' The people are civil and quiet, and I never heard of a row taking place in them. As it was too dark to see much more of the village, Georgie proposed that we should give up any further explorations, making up for the concession by a few minutes in the gaming-shop. I saw no particular harm in doing so, and said to myself we need not stop more than a few minutes; so in we went.

It was a large hut, partly made of bamboo matting, and partly of bricks. Several rude oil-lamps, stuck on poles, gave a flickering and partial light. In the centre was a large table, at one end

of which sat the 'banker,' with a heap of 'cash'—the little brass coin of the country—before him, and a few small pieces of silver in a box on his right; on the other sides stood the players. The game was very simple. A square piece of wood lay on the middle of the table, divided into four squares by white lines, each square numbered. The players placed their money, mostly copper, in one of these squares, or sometimes on one of the separating lines. When all was staked, the banker took a large handful of the cash, placed them conspicuously before him, and told them off with a 'chopstick' by fours; the residue denoting the winners—one coin remaining, the money on number one square being doubled, and so on; those who placed their money on the lines getting half their stake, should the remainder correspond with the numbers on either side of the line chosen. All others of course lost; and should there be no remainder, the banker also swept up all the stakes.

I was looking on at one of the gamblers, an old, nervous-looking Chinaman, whose whole life seemed concentrated on the few coppers he had staked, and who was watching the monotonous counting with starting eyes; the count came to an end, and the old man won, and hurried away, clutching his winnings with intense eagerness. As he left, I turned towards Georgie, and found him in the act of picking up a couple of quarter-dollars from the table; whilst I had been watching the old gambler, the young rascal had staked a shilling, that by some wonderful chance was in his pocket, and had doubled it. It was impossible to be angry with the boy, he put on such a piteous face; and then, seeing me smile, he pushed the two shillings on to the board, and entreated me to let them remain, promising at the same time to come away the instant the count was over. It was too late to say no, for the cash were already being counted, and to take the money away might have led to a row. It was soon over: the boy, as luck would have it, won again; and pocketing his dollar as proudly as if it had been a bank-note, he followed me out of the place.

When we got into the street, it was quite dark, though the stars gave just enough light to see the road, which was white and broad. We soon got out of the village, and walked quickly along towards the ship. The road was quite deserted now; scarcely a breath of wind was stirring; and save the harsh cry of the nightjars, and the hum of insects, there was not a sound to be heard.

We had gone more than a mile, when Georgie stopped to tie his shoe-string. I walked on. He soon came running up, and declared that he had heard some one following us. The road we were on was much frequented, and nothing was more probable than that some person should be on it, travelling the same way as ourselves: however, to make sure, I stopped an instant, and listened. The moment we stopped, I heard footsteps behind, at some little distance, to judge by the sound. We were about fifty yards from a dark bit of the road, lying under some trees; between that and us, the

road lay broad and clear: the steps sounded as if on the verge of this shady part; that they were not nearer was evident. We had not stood longer than a few seconds when the footsteps stopped also; we walked on a few paces, and stopped again, but could not hear them; the road between the trees and ourselves was distinct, and still no one was to be seen on it. Ashamed to appear nervous before the lad, I turned round, and laughingly making some light remark, walked sharply on.

We had a couple of light canes with us, but they would be quite useless in case of a skrimmage, not by any means an uncommon occurrence in China, by the way; so I picked up a stone from the bank as we walked, and tying it in a corner of my handkerchief, after the Yankee fashion, felt more comfortable. The road, now, in front, as far as we could see, was wide and open; there were no trees; and the bank on the upper side was no higher than our waists; on the other side were the open rice-fields.

The moon was just bursting out from a bank of clouds in front, and Georgie chattered away at my side, so any apprehension I may have had was fast fading away. Close in front, on the side of the hill, was a large tomb, which we had often visited, as it lay about two miles from the ship, and was within distance of a short walk when we got away late. We had scarcely passed it, when Georgie shouted out: 'Look out, sir; there's a man in the tomb!'

I turned sharply round, only just in time to avoid the fellow. He had made a spring out of the courtyard of the grave, intending to fall on me; behind him were a couple more. As he passed me, I let fly with my slung stone, catching him somewhere on his body; he staggered on, but did not fall. This gave us a moment's time. A few yards ahead was a dead tree—it was our only chance—once there, we might defend ourselves till some one came. 'The tree, Georgie,' I shouted: 'run, boy, for your life!' And away we both sped, the two ruffians close behind, and the third one reeling after them. We were but just in time; but I turned, and had my back against the trunk, with the boy alongside, ere they came up. Fortunately, they had no weapons, not even sticks, or we could not long have stood against them.

Seeing our position, they now brought up about two yards from us, and began pulling faces, and making intimidating motions; this continued some time, till, finding we were not to be 'grinned' out, they grew desperate, and closing in a little, gave me a chance with my stone. I caught one fellow on his cheek, and doubled him up, rolling him over like a bullock. 'Now for it, Georgie,' I cried; 'in at them!' And before they knew what was up, I rushed out and closed with the second. I met him with my left hand in the face, intending to follow it up with the stone; but he was too much for me, and before I could recover myself, had my arms pinioned to my side. Close behind was the third fellow, who had first attacked us; he was coming up with a large stone raised above his head, and making at me. A sickening sensation came over me, and I made a frantic struggle to get free, but the ruffian held me like a vice. As my eyes fell, under the expected blow, I saw Georgie creeping under our legs; and the next instant, with a great heave, down we went, the rascal never quitting his hold of me, but carrying me with him to the ground, where we lay rolling over and over, as I strove to escape. Just then, Georgie came

crawling up on his knees, holding his open penknife: the boy seized the fellow by his hair, as he tumbled about, and gave him such a dig in the face, that with the pain he gave a hideous yell, and let go his hold. I sprang up, just in time to receive a crushing blow from the third man. A thousand sparks flashed in the air—a bursting sensation filled my brain—the earth reeled round and round—and then all faded into darkness, and I felt no more.

I could not have lain very long, for when I recovered I was still in the same place in which I fell, and a couple of the men were on their knees rifling my clothes, one of them slitting them up with Georgie's knife, whilst the other fumbled about in search of anything that might be there. I had presence of mind enough to remain perfectly still; and so intent were they on their search, that the slight movement I made on coming round had passed unnoticed.

I was lying on my back, across the road, with my feet towards the hillside, up which I could see for some distance, owing to the rising moon: up and down the road, I could catch a side-glance only, but that was sufficient to shew me there was no one on it. Georgie I could not see anywhere, neither the third man. As I grew more conscious, so did my anxiety increase as to what had become of the boy: that he was unhurt, was more than probable, for had he been so, his body could not be far off, and the time had been too short to admit of its removal. My hope was that he had escaped, intending to get help from the ship; a conjecture made more likely by the absence of the third man, who would, in all probability, have followed the lad, as soon as his escape was discovered.

After mauling me about for some minutes, the two men gave it up, and squatting down within a yard of me, began looking over their spoils. My little Geneva watch was set carefully aside; then came my penknife, silver pencil-case, and the studs and links from my shirt—these were all examined, and placed near the watch; and then the fellow next me cautiously opening his hand, which had been tightly shut, shewed to his mate some half-dozen small silver coins, which I recognised as the money I had about me when we left the ship: Georgie's dollar was not among them, conclusive proof the boy had got off. The sight of the money called up a grin on the ruffians' faces, and they began eagerly to divide it; a matter of considerable difficulty, to judge by their gestures and low jabbering talk.

It must have been a strange scene: my blood-stained face turned upwards, in feigned death—the two brawny ruffians seated beside me, savagely growling over the bits of silver—the moon, now over the tree-tops, casting their black shadows across the road—the hillside, every bush and stone distinct, every shadow hard and cold—the tomb just above, gleaming white and spectral, the bits of paper fluttering fitfully as the rising night-wind soughed and whistled down the valley—the long white road, so still and lonely—and the dead tree flinging its solitary branch across it, gaunt and leafless, as if in vain entreating help.

Now with a wild cry, a night-hawk breaks the stillness, and, ghost-like, follows its own shadow along the hill—a faint chorus of bull-frogs rises from the rice-fields below—far away, the bark of a solitary dog tells of a village; it comes from the direction of Whampoa, and straining my eyes, I

almost fancy I can trace the mast-heads of the ships there; but the moonlight flickers and fades under a passing cloud, and the tree-tops blending with the darkening sky, hardly shew a line against it. The men were still wrangling over the money, neither seeming able to agree as to the value of certain pieces, when happening to look up the hill, my eye caught something in motion. It was only a vague momentary glimpse, almost an idea, hardly a glance; the flicker of a moonbeam, the swaying of a bush; but with my brain eager, almost bursting with hopes of rescue, it riveted me to the spot. Just there was a clump of dark bushes, clustering round some boulders; not very large, nor yet high enough to conceal a person, but only just sufficient to render objects near them indistinct. The moon was under a long line of fleecy cloud, that stretched across the sky, dimming her light, and softening the outlines of the shadows till it was not easy to distinguish them from objects; and the wind playing along the slope gave just enough motion to the taller bushes to render it difficult to fix the eye on any one spot. Just then, a pebble came trundling down the hill, rolling with little or no noise over the short grass, till it pitched on to the road close to me. The slight noise it did make roused the two men; they started up, and one of them, taking a step toward me, bent over my body. From under my eyelids, I saw his rugged face peering into mine; I felt his suppressed breath hot on my cheek, chilled as it was with the cool night-air. For a minute he watched me, then seeing no signs of life, he returned to his mate, and they began gathering up their spoils, evidently intending to be off. This revived my hopes; for thinking me dead, they would most probably leave me lying as I was, and then I could easily get back to the ship. At that moment, my eye again caught something moving on the hill, this time lower down. The moon was still dimmed, but I could just distinguish what seemed like a clump of bushes nearer to me, and higher than the others that studded the slope, and which I could not remember to have noticed before. On these my attention was fixed. Behind them, a little to the left, was a large rock, which from its colour shewed out somewhat clearly from the surrounding shade. It seemed a fancy, and yet I could not get it out of my head that this clump of bushes was growing larger, as I looked; yet the next moment, a flicker of the moonlight, and I almost smiled at the idea. Certainly they were swaying in the wind; I could trace their outline plainly against the rock: but the wind died away, and still they swayed as much as ever. Then it struck me that the space between them and the rock had grown larger; this I determined to watch. A vague thought of help, a sort of hoping against hope, was springing up in me, and I caught at every straw.

It was Georgie, so I thought, returned with some of the men to the rescue. Then the absurdity of the idea flashed across me; the ship was two miles away, and Georgie, had he escaped, could not have been gone ten minutes. But the space was certainly growing wider. There, I saw it again! As plainly as the light would allow, I distinctly saw the bushes move. There it is again!—now more palpable. I see a dark line creeping towards me—the space is wide enough now—it is coming quicker and quicker—now a dark thing rises—now another—a hurried noise—a sound of many feet trampling—a great cry, as of fiends let loose—and the clump

of bushes rise into life, and dash down upon us. I try to cry out, and struggle to rise; already I see my two assailants fighting desperately, writhing and twisting about in the midst. Now the crowd surges towards me; I cannot rise—if they fall, I shall be crushed. I strive again to cry out, but my voice has lost its power. Down, down they come—ah! they reel away again; one fellow slips, down under the writhing mass he falls, and with a mad plunge, the whole come hurtling down in one confused heap of limbs and bodies; their fierce breathing and smothered yells telling of the fury of the hideous struggle.

Making an effort, I raised myself on my elbow, and looked on. I was too weak to get up, or I could easily have stolen away unperceived. As yet, I could not distinguish whether the last-comers were friends or foes, though every hope, every thought pointed to the former. I soon saw that they were all Chinamen—a sad blow to my hopes; still, they might be workmen from the dockyard, and if so, would be friends.

After a short time, the tangled mass untwined itself, and the combatants rolled out one by one on to the clear road, and stood up; two, either stunned or dead, still remaining on the ground; I recognised them by their clothes as the two original robbers.

One of the band now came towards me, and made a sign to me to get up. I shook my head, and pointed to my forehead, which was thick with clotted blood and dirt. Seizing me roughly by the arm, without taking any notice of my sign, he then tried to raise me, and pulled me on to my feet; but I was too weak to stand, and when he let go, I tottered and fell. Calling some of the others, he gave an order in Chinese, and walked away; the men immediately sprang up the hill, and began cutting at the bushes. In a little time, they returned, each with a bundle of good-sized twigs; these they stripped of their leaves, and plaited into a rude seat having a handle at each corner. Their intentions were now obvious: I was to accompany them; where, and how, I could not conjecture; alas! my heart told me but too well that it would be as a prisoner, though for what purpose I could not imagine.

Seeing the seat finished, the man who seemed a sort of chief amongst them, gave an order, whereupon four of the band lifted me into the litter, placing me in a sitting position, and having raised it in their arms, stood ready to move off. Beside me were the two ruffians, the cause of the whole affair. They lay full length, and quite still; the one nearest me on his back, his teeth clenched, and his face distorted with agony; his arms lay out at right angles to his body, and the fingers were tightly closed: I noticed several on the left hand were missing. There was a dark patch under his left side, towards me; but it might have been the shadow of his body. Beyond him lay his comrade, doubled up in a heap, his face underneath: the attitude was strained and unnatural, but might only have been the effects of fear.

Three men now stepped up and took hold of the body lying nearest to me; it never moved, but lay motionless and stiff in their arms, one leg dangling helplessly downwards. They lifted him towards the roadside, and, with a heave, flung him into the rice-fields; the body fell with a heavy splash, and that was all—no cry, no groan came back from the swamp. The men then took up the second; as

they lifted him, a dark line oozed from his open jaws, and his head fell heavily on to his chest: again the rice-swamp splashed with its ghastly burden, and again all was still. The men returned, and we moved off, turning up the hill to the left. On the road behind us, two dark splotches marked the spot where the men had lain—there was no other sign to tell of the horrid doings the place had but just witnessed. After ascending for some distance, we came to a rough gully, and crossing this, found ourselves in a dry water-course. Here the four men who had carried me were relieved, and we again started.

The water-course tended sharply downwards, and was strewn with great water-worn boulders, that glistened strangely in the moonlight, and made walking extremely difficult: but the men were evidently well acquainted with the road, and never slackened their pace, or appeared uncertain of the direction to be taken. The water-course must have been a mile in length, and debouched into a narrow valley at right angles to it. Up this we turned. The hills on either side were rugged and broken—their great gray masses cropping out in jagged lines, and flinging themselves against the sky in huge pinnacles, not unlike old battlemented castles and keeps—a deception aided by the uncertain light. From these, long slopes of broken rock and *débris* shelved away to the centre of the valley, and over these our path lay. After following it for some miles, the leader called a halt. Just below the place was a little circle of stones, with a clear pool of water in the centre—the first we had seen—and to this the men now hastened, the chief only remaining beside me, as a precaution, I suppose, against escape, though, what with loss of blood and the jolting of the litter, I was by no means in a state to attempt it.

When the men had refreshed themselves at the spring, they came up again, and squatted round us in silence. As soon as all were seated, the leader began talking in a quick impressive manner, the band listening attentively, but without shewing any signs of acquiescence or approval. As the speaker went on, he evidently warned to his subject, working himself up, throwing his arms about, and gesticulating wildly, till, suddenly jumping to his feet, he stretched out both his hands towards the opposite mountain, and uttering a wild prolonged guttural, seemed waiting for an answer. Nor were the men slow in giving one. Throwing off their lethargy, they sprang up, and uttering the same guttural cry, raised their right arms above their heads; then seizing my litter with a violence that almost capsize me, they followed the direction their chief had indicated. He had already crossed the valley, jumping from stone to stone; his wild figure, with its streaming blue clothes behind it, seeming to fly at times.

At the other side of the valley was a little stream, creeping down amongst the boulders, silent and dark; crossing it, the ascent commenced. I could not see any path; indeed, all along, the men had appeared to move by instinct rather than by any visible signs. Still, hitherto they had the sides of the valley to guide them, whereas now the gray hill seemed everywhere to melt into undefined space. Now and again, the rocks would close round us, shutting out the moonlight, and wrapping us in chilly darkness, from which there seemed to be no outlet, till, turning a corner, the hillside again glimmered before us. At every

step, the ascent grew steeper, and the breathing of the men more laborious; they now took long, slow steps, keeping time with a low chant, resting every ten minutes or so, and relieving each other frequently. Presently, emerging from a chaos of rocks and boulders, we gained the crest of the hill, where the night-wind was blowing cold and strong. On either hand, seemed an impenetrable depth, the side we had ascended looking almost perpendicular in the uncertain light. After a few minutes of rest, the band started along the ridge, here unbroken and nearly level. In a short time, it rose again, if anything, steeper than before, and another climb began. Here I noticed we continually tended to the right, ascending in a sloping direction; the masses of rock, too, became fewer, with longer intervals between, disappearing altogether when we had gone some two miles or more. When they had entirely ceased, the direction was again changed—the leader moving across the mountain, in a line parallel with its base, and the band following him.

Owing to this change, they were able to push along much faster, and with fewer reliefs; and judging by their occasional remarks and frequent pointing ahead, I fancied we could not be far from our destination. Nor was I wrong. As we rose on the crest of a long ridge that rolled down the hillside, a white object appeared immediately in front, at the sight of which the men gave a grunt of satisfaction, and increasing their pace, soon came up to it. It was one of the large circular courtyards I have mentioned before, that the Chinese build in front of their burial-places. This one, from its size and remote situation, must have belonged to a family high in the land, though now fallen into disuse, and consequently chosen by my captors as a convenient retreat. Placing the litter down, two of the men made signs to me to rise. The cool air had revived me, and though still feeling weak, I was able to stand up, and walk across towards the back of the courtyard. Here was a small opening, into which one of the fellows entered on his hands and knees; and the other one, forcing me gently down into the same position, made signs for me to follow—the former one stretching out his hand from within for my guidance. In this way I crawled in.

The passage was quite dark, and was only just high enough to allow me to kneel upright; even then my head touched the roof. There was a damp, earthy feeling about it, and the sides were cold and clammy. After crawling for a few yards, the passage turned sharply to the right, and the glimmer of a light appeared. The passage now gradually grew larger, till, after a few more steps, I was able to stand upright; the next minute, we emerged from it altogether. I found myself in a small chamber about twenty feet square; the roof was low, not much over a tall man's head, and like the sides, was black with smoke and dirt. Opposite where I had entered was a second opening, like the first, without door or shutter of any kind. In the centre of the chamber stood a rough table, formed by some planks, supported on several loose piles of stones. Round this the leader and most of the men were standing—some taking off their waistbelts, and laying their long knives on the table; others drinking out of a bamboo-cup, which was constantly replenished from a gourd. Some rolls of matting, a pile of brass cooking-pots, and a few antique-looking *jingals* standing against the

wall, completed the furniture of the place. The gourd was handed round by a little misshapen dwarf, with a huge head, and a row of teeth that protruded from his mouth like a rabbit's: his head was bare, save for a scrubby pigtail sticking straight out from the shining scalp; and his eyes twinkled with an expression that might have been merriment or malice, as circumstances prompted.

His remarks, as he poured out the liquor, seemed to be vastly comic, for, after each, the men chuckled and laughed, some slapping the little monster familiarly on the back, others bestowing an amiable kick.

I had been in the place some minutes before he saw me. I was leaning against the entrance, slightly in the shade of the light, which was not very brilliant, and so escaped notice; but the instant his eyes fell on me, he gave a skip forward, and standing on tiptoe, with his head on one side, looked straight up in my face. The look of the creature was so intensely comic, and the tuft at the back of his head gave it so extraordinary an appearance, that, notwithstanding my ticklish position, I could not help laughing outright. In no way disconcerted, he began patting me in a most patronising manner, jumping round me, and uttering a quick succession of sentences, at which the men laughed most heartily. Then putting on a serious face, he suddenly stopped in front of me, and placing his hands on his sides, began a long harangue in Chinese, interspersed with a few words of broken English, too mutilated to be intelligible. After this had gone on for some time, and the men seemed tired of their amusement, the chief broke out from the group that stood round, and pushing the dwarf roughly away, laid hold of my arm, and led me across to the table. Having reached it, he pointed to a large stone that lay beside it, and made signs for me to sit. I did so; but the exertion of standing so long, and walking to the table, made me feel giddy, and I leaned my head on my hands. At a word from the chief, one of the men brought me a bamboo cup; it was full of *samshoo*, a vile spirit made from rice; but I drank some of it, with an effort, and sat up.

Seeing me do so, the chief brought out from under the table a small roll of paper, very coarse and yellow; also a little slab, such as the Chinese use to rub their ink upon, and a small cake of ink, which one of his men began to rub on the slab. Then from his waistbelt he took the long box in which they carry pens, and opening it, took out a reed-pen, and laid it beside the paper; lastly, he drew his long-pointed knife, and laying it conspicuously before me, made signs for me to write. The band stood round the table mutely watching, the dwarf just opposite me, his head barely above it, his little eyes twinkling with malignant fun, and his hideous features working with the effort he was making to be silent.

Though I pretty well guessed what they wanted, still I pretended not to understand, shaking my head, and making no attempt at writing. On this, a couple of men stepped up, and laying hold of my shoulders so as to hold me down, placed both my arms on the table, the right one on the paper, the left stretched out towards the chief. Taking up the knife, he grasped my wrist, forcing my hand, palm downwards, on the boards, and placed it across my little finger, just above the knuckle, pressing it down so tightly as to draw blood; at the same time a man opposite raised a stone in his

hand, and holding it over the knife, evidently waited for the word to strike. The rest of the men looked on in silence. Now their intentions were so plain, I saw it would be madness to resist: they had no doubt captured me in hopes of a ransom, and were ready to employ a method, very common amongst Chinese freebooters, to enforce their demands: a finger a day from my unlucky hands would be sent in to my friends, should they hesitate to pay the sum demanded. If this stratagem failed, there would, I knew, be but little hopes for my life: dead men tell no tales, and the jackals outside would soon put any proofs as to identity out of the question.

Making a sign of assent, I took up the pen. A sound of approbation broke from the fellows, and a low chorus of 'Ah-yah!' 'Ah-yah!' went round. The chief loosed my wrist. I placed the paper in front of me; dipped the pen, or rather brush, in the ink, and began my letter.

The only personal friend I had at Whampoa, besides my shipmates, was the harbour-master, an old school-fellow, and holding an influential position; he would be, I thought, the most likely to help me. I therefore wrote as follows:

MY DEAR ELSTON—Myself and young George Thompson have been waylaid, and I am a prisoner in the mountains. Thompson is not with me. I don't know whether he is dead or alive. The fellows threaten to cut off my fingers if a ransom is not paid. Get assistance, and try and hunt out this place—a large tomb, lying about due west of Whampoa, on a bare hillside, and, as near as I can judge, fifteen miles away. I cannot say any more, as it was dark when they brought me here. Try and help me, for the sake of old days, and promise money, or give it if necessary, so as to get time. I am in great peril. Thompson I lost sight of two miles from the ship, when I was knocked over.—Yours ever,
EDWARD FAGAN.

Seeing I had finished, the chief nodding his approbation, made a sign to the dwarf. Jumping on the table, the imp squatted down before me, and laying hold of the letter, pretended to read it. When he had finished, he beckoned to one of the men, saying a few words; the fellow went to one corner of the place, stooped down, and picking up something, placed it on the table before the dwarf. It was a quantity of small pebbles, and these the dwarf began counting out, till he had a pile of a hundred. The chief then laying his knife beside them, called my attention to them, the dwarf holding up one finger as he did so. Seeing I comprehended, the chief now drew the heap away, and again returned them, the dwarf holding up two fingers—and this operation they repeated five times—when the chief, pushing them away, snatched up the knife, and with a quick gesture drew the back of it smartly across my fingers, pointing to the open letter as he did so. There was no mistaking this. Five hundred dollars were demanded as the price of my fingers: not an exorbitant demand, after all, but as impossible for me to realise as twenty times the sum would have been. But my only chance being delay, I added a postscript to my letter, as follows: 'The fellows value my fingers at ten pounds apiece; total value, five hundred dollars. For God's sake, don't delay!' Then closing the letter, I addressed it—Captain Elston, Harbour-master, Whampoa; or, if absent—Captain Hamilton, C.B., H.M.S. *Alceste* (Immediate).

Having folded it, the chief gave it to one of the men, with a short order; the man undid one of the rolls of matting I have mentioned, taking from it a 'jumper,' and a pair of loose trousers, of blue 'dungaree,' such as the natives about the English ships wear. These he exchanged with his rather wild-looking clothes, and placing the note in his round flat cap, he left the cave by the way I had entered.

VEGETABLE PARCHMENT.

As long ago as the year 1841, a civil engineer, William Edward Gaine by name, conceived the idea of manufacturing tracing-paper without the employment of any oily matter. Such paper would present certain advantages over the ordinary tracing-paper which engineers and others use in preparing maps and plans. In the course of his experiments, Mr Gaine discovered that a powerful acid, called sulphuric acid, has a remarkable action on the surface of paper.

Ten years later, the same gentleman turned his attention to the improvement of paper used for photographic purposes. As every one knows, various salts of silver are employed in photography, and the desideratum was a material the surface of which shall be acted on uniformly by these salts. At the time of making the experiments, sized papers albumenised were commonly used; but the modes of sizing were so various that no uniform result could be obtained. Mr Gaine, being aware of the peculiar action of sulphuric acid on paper, just spoken of, instituted a series of experiments to determine the action of acids of various strengths on sized and unsized papers, and while so engaged, he came across a very singular and unexpected result, in no way connected with photography. He found that unsized paper—familiarily known as blotting-paper—dipped into sulphuric acid diluted to a certain point with water, undergoes a remarkable change throughout its whole texture. Blotting-paper which has been thus treated has much the outward appearance of membrane, and it has therefore been named vegetable parchment.

In order to insure this remarkable conversion of blotting-paper (technically called *water-leaf*) into vegetable parchment, many precautions are requisite. In the first place, when sulphuric acid and water are mixed together great heat is evolved, through what is called in chemistry the affinity these liquids have for each other. It is important that the mixture should be allowed to cool before the *water-leaf* is dipped. The large amount of heat generated when strong sulphuric acid and water are mixed, gave rise to an accident during the early attempts at manufacture. One of the workmen incautiously mixing the water and acid, a quantity of steam was given off, and spurted out the acid, which came in contact with the face of the operator. The effect might have been serious, but fortunately the man escaped without personal injury. The amount of dilution of the acid is an important matter. If it is too weak, the paper is dissolved; if too strong, it is charred. The former fact may be curiously illustrated by sprinkling the paper with water. The leaf on being dipped into sulphuric acid of proper strength, will be converted into vegetable parchment; but the damp sprinkled part will be dissolved away. A number of careful trials have shewn that the sulphuric acid of commerce, of a specific gravity of 1.845, commonly

known as oil of vitriol, must be diluted with half its bulk of water, in order that the conversion of *water-leaf* may be attended with success.

One cannot fail to be struck with the fact, that a body, possessed of such remarkable solvent properties as sulphuric acid, should, at this particular strength, give a material which will bear a great deal of rough usage, and which is scarcely assailable by the strongest chemical agents, such as acids and alkalis. Water has but little effect on it. On wetting vegetable parchment, it behaves like animal membrane; that is, it becomes soft and yielding, and on drying, it resumes its former condition. It withstands the action of boiling-water, which animal parchment will not. It is used by the inventor and by others as a substitute for pudding-cloths, and for enveloping fish while boiling. After use, it is simply washed, and is ready to be boiled again. Food boiled in this envelope is said to possess more richness and flavour than when treated in the ordinary way.

Another curious fact connected with the material is, that the chemical composition of the paper and of the sulphuric acid remains unchanged; that is to say, the paper gains nothing and loses nothing. Except as a question of expense, the whole of the acid used for the conversion could be recovered without loss. The converted paper, if submitted to chemical analysis, is found to be composed of the same elements as it was before the transformation. The explanation of this fact is, that decomposition does not take place on exposure of paper to the action of sulphuric acid; the molecules of matter of which the paper is composed are merely rearranged.

This rearrangement takes place with great rapidity. A piece of blotting-paper passed into the acid is converted, in a few seconds, into a gelatinous gummy sheet. This conveyed into water, in order to get rid of the acid, becomes, within a minute, a tough, elastic, skin-like substance, which, when thoroughly freed from acid, is the vegetable parchment of commerce. Freedom from acid is insured by repeated washings in water, and by immersion in a weak solution of ammonia. Any slight trace of acid which the washing might have failed to remove is thus converted into sulphate of ammonia, a stable body, the presence of which can by no possibility injure the vegetable parchment.

Great care is taken to remove all the acid, for were any allowed to remain, the paper would rapidly lose its texture, and would in time fall to pieces.

The absence of acid has been satisfactorily established by Dr Hofmann and by other chemists. Dr Hofmann left the most delicate test-papers for hours in contact with moistened vegetable parchment, and they did not exhibit the slightest change of colour. He also cut up several square feet of parchment into strips, and boiled them for half a day with water, filtered off the liquid, and concentrated it to a few drops. This liquid was found to contain no acid, and paper moistened with it, and dried at boiling temperature, was no more affected than when treated in the same way with pure water. Hence Dr Hofmann concludes, and with reason, that vegetable parchment does not carry within it any destructive germ. Time alone can prove the absolute indestructibility of this parchment. Specimens made sixteen years ago are in existence: they are in every respect as perfect as when first produced.

It is a simple enough act to dip a bit of blotting-paper first into a basin of acid, and then into one of water; indeed, Mr Grove, Q.C., when applying for an extension of Gaine's patent, actually converted water-leaf into parchment while addressing the Privy Council. The rapid conversion of the former material, so easily torn and so readily disintegrated by water, into a substance that bears an indefinite amount of rubbing and washing, has almost the effect on the beholder of a conjuring trick. Easy as it is to operate thus on strips of paper, the practical difficulties of manufacture on a large scale are manifold.

One of the difficulties in constructing apparatus for the production of vegetable parchment in large sheets is due to the corrosive nature of the acid employed. In order to render vegetable parchment commercially available, the material must be produced with the aid of machinery, and not entirely by hand. Hence it becomes necessary to use rollers to conduct the paper through the acid smoothly and evenly, and to squeeze out the excess of acid after the passage of the water-leaf through it. These rollers must clearly be made of some material that resists the action of sulphuric acid. Now, it so happens that iron is not acted on by sulphuric acid of the particular strength employed for the conversion of water-leaf. But the machinery, when cleansed with water from time to time, as must be done, would be brought into contact with a more dilute acid, which would completely destroy iron rollers. Objections also exist to the employment of other metals.

Glass rollers were therefore made, but their use had to be relinquished. It was easy to obtain glass rollers in the rough, but, to say nothing of the difficulty of fixing them on spindles without fracture, manufacturers could not be found who would undertake to grind them to a true surface, which is essential to their use. At length, such rollers were contracted for; but after vain attempts to perfect them, extending over a period of some months, glass rollers had finally to be abandoned.

Ultimately, after the expenditure of considerable time and money, Mr Gaine discovered that pure gutta-percha was applicable to the peculiar requirements of the manufacture. In the first experiments with this substance, it was found that the rollers became deformed during use. But by a lengthened seasoning previous to the final turning, gutta-percha rollers that remained sufficiently true were eventually made. An elastic web is also required in connection with the rollers, to conduct the water-leaf first through the acid, then between the rollers, and then into water. For this object, gutta-percha would not answer, in consequence of its want of elasticity. It was found that vulcanised india-rubber resists the action of the acid, but it does not answer the purpose of the web, from its being too elastic and extensible under pressure. This difficulty, after many trials and many failures, was surmounted by cementing a web of canvas between two layers of rubber, and subsequently vulcanising the web.

Apparatus having been contrived, the question next arose as to where the manufacture should be conducted. A large quantity of dilute sulphuric acid would have to be got rid of or neutralised. Again, it is important that the conversion of the water-leaf should be perfected in the mill where it is manufactured; for the adaptability of the water-leaf must be watched by the same person who

carries on the process of conversion, as becomes evident on considering the delicate nature of the operations which have been already described.

It is needless to enter into an account of the difficulties experienced in getting paper-makers to work the invention; suffice it to say, that negotiations were entered into with several houses, and that the efforts made to produce the article on a large scale culminated in success in the year 1858—four long weary years after the patent was taken out. The material now being obtainable in quantity, active steps were taken to bring it into public notice. It was hoped that it would be adopted for legal and commercial documents such as require a substance more durable than paper, the price of vegetable parchment being but a fraction of that of animal parchment. There is, however, great hesitation among members of the legal profession in adopting novelties, and this may perhaps account for their not taking kindly to paper parchment. It has been objected that ink can be removed from vegetable parchment, by certain chemical agents, so perfectly as to leave no trace of its ever having been present. This is unquestionably the case with certain kinds of ink; but by varnishing the surface of vegetable parchment, obliteration without detection can be rendered impossible. The question of durability has been fairly set at rest by the scientific investigations already referred to. At all events, there seems no possible objection to the use of vegetable parchment for such documents as insurance policies and dock-warrants.

Hitherto, the chief purpose to which vegetable parchment has been put is to close vessels in which preserved fruits and other eatables are contained. The advantages it possesses over bladder are, that it is inodorous, and is not liable to encourage fermentation, as, unlike animal membrane, it contains no nitrogen; it is not readily attacked by insects or mice; and it is more elegant in appearance, and more economical, than bladder. To cover a gross of jam-pots with the cheapest skins, costs about eighteenpence; with best bladder, nearly three shillings. The cost of vegetable parchment for this purpose is about a shilling. Since the year 1859, one firm alone has covered nearly six million pots with this material. Nothing need be added to shew the superiority of vegetable parchment over bladder for domestic purposes.

A very singular use for vegetable parchment, and one previously quite unknown, was announced in 1861 by Professor Graham, Master of the Mint. It has long been known that animal membrane, though not porous, is permeable, under certain conditions; but no application of this fact to the purposes of analysis was made, until Professor Graham published his great discovery, that crystallisable substances in solution may thus be separated from those which will not crystallise. This process is called *dialysis*. To take a familiar example. If soup which is too salt is placed in a bladder, and suspended in water, the salt will be removed without impoverishing the soup. In the laboratory, the knowledge of this fact is invaluable. Thus, in searching for poisons mixed with food and other contents of the stomach, as has to be done in various medico-legal investigations, one of the great difficulties formerly experienced was to separate the poison; but now, by dialysis, poisons capable of crystallising, and these are the majority, can readily be detected. A more agreeable application of Professor Graham's discovery is in the

purification of sugar. A French chemist, named Du Brunfaut, has managed this with great success.

For the purpose of dialysis, animal membrane was first used; but Professor Graham found that vegetable parchment possesses the same qualities as regards permeability, and is more cleanly and less destructible. It can also be manufactured of any required size, which parchment cannot. It is doubtful whether dialysis could have been so thoroughly tested and examined but for the existence of vegetable parchment.

In 1865, vegetable parchment was employed in enveloping gun-cotton cartridges used for blasting. The makers of these cartridges are at present sending out about thirty thousand a week, and the demand for them is increasing. Very recently, it has been found that vegetable parchment is of great value in packeting tea. Tea thus enveloped retains its aroma for an indefinite time; and the vegetable parchment does not communicate any odour or flavour to the tea. All kinds of tea deteriorate in a short time by being packed in the ordinary papers; tea becomes injuriously affected from this cause within twelve hours; and within a week, there is a loss of quality of about twenty-five per cent. Tea is very sensitive to odours and flavours; it imbibes the taste of anything surrounding it. A single drop of sapid liquid will flavour a whole package in twelve hours. All kinds of coverings have been resorted to, but none appears so good as vegetable parchment. It will probably come into extensive use for packeting tea.

There are doubtless many other purposes for which vegetable parchment might be employed; but, as is pretty sure to be the case on the introduction of an entirely new raw material, the development of its uses requires time. That it is a most valuable substance there can be no question. Unfortunately, the exigencies of the manufacture have been such as to involve delay and expenditure in production; and, added to this, the paralysed condition of the paper-trade during the agitation for the repeal of the duty, and after its repeal, was such as seriously to damage commercial enterprise in connection with paper. All this time the patent was running out; and at the end of last year, it expired. On evidence being given before the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, embracing the facts related in the foregoing article, their lordships admitted the great merit of the invention, and were satisfied that the expenses had been considerable, while the remuneration had been almost nothing. They therefore advised that the patent should be prolonged for a period of five years, dating from December last.

A CHANGE OF LUCK.

CHAPTER XII.—WHO WAS IT ASSAULTED SIR MARK?

SIR MARK explained very little of the mystery by his account of it. He had just entered the conservatory, when there came a rushing noise behind him, the blow followed, and he fell. That was literally all he knew of it, for when he painfully awoke to consciousness, he was lying on the bed in his gilded chamber. Dr Morris and a couple of other physicians (for whom messengers rode post-haste), however, announced, to the relief of everybody, that the wound was not very critically

dangerous. But for a wound at all to be inflicted on the sacred person of the great man of that district, in his own stately dwelling, and, so to speak, in the midst of the gay gathering of his friends—it was horrible! Was it an attempt to assassinate the baronet? Some of the more romantic individuals among the terror-stricken groups, difficult as it was to hit upon any motive, or to suspect the criminal, at first wished to believe that such was the case.

But the official report put forward, after full inquiry, was, that it was simply an accident, which was thus explained. The conservatory, as has been mentioned, was a wooden structure, and had been erected for the occasion; the piece of wood found lying beside the wounded baronet matched with the rest of the timber: none of the workmen could account for it, but the supposition hazarded was, that, in some way, the piece of wood had been left insecurely fastened to the inside of the roof, and, unluckily, just at the moment Sir Mark was passing underneath, its fastenings must have given way. A general impression appeared to prevail that it shewed a great fault somewhere that the Fates had not arranged for some less valuable cranium to receive the blow. It was, after all, the most likely explanation of the startling affair; and Sir Mark himself at once feebly murmured his acceptance of it. The other alternative, that an assassin was included among the guests of the evening, and that the murder of the baronet had been attempted, was too incredible a supposal. There was, however, one individual in the house, who, judging from the inquiries he was quietly making, was not so easily satisfied. It was Adams, who was not at the Lodge at the time the occurrence took place, being in the adjoining town on the holiday volunteered to him by the baronet.

'I am very glad, doctor, to hear Sir Mark's case is not so serious,' said Adams, speaking with Dr Morris in the entrance-hall on the following morning.

'Between ourselves, I am not very sorry it did happen.' Dr Morris, among other peculiarities, had that of liking to surprise people.

'Really, that is a strange remark!' replied Adams, to whom the doctor was no stranger.

'Why,' said the other, smiling, 'it let him blood, and I think he wanted it. Sir Mark's nervous system was not in order; and this has, at anyrate, saved him from the risk of apoplexy, or anything of that kind.'

'Perhaps he had overexerted himself in arranging for the *fête*;' and there was a cunning twinkle in Adams's eyes.—'Where is the wound, doctor?'

'Here,' said Dr Morris, pausing, in the act of drawing on his glove, to raise the hand to his own head.

'Oh, at the base of the skull, nearly, and to the left side? But how could a piece of wood, falling from the roof, hit there?'

'What? Hit there? It could not do so directly.' The doctor brought his eyebrows down, looking rather puzzled.

'Not "directly?"' echoed Adams. 'There were the trailing-plants hung across—do you think it came into contact with the side-wall, and glanced away to Sir Mark?'

'I have not seen the spot. It must have been done somehow in that way, for nobody would dare to attack Sir Mark. Pooh, pooh!'

'Certainly not.—You have not seen the spot?'

and Adams smoothly proceeded: 'You have had the piece of wood in your hand—what weight do you think it to be?'

'Three or four pounds, I should say—four or five, perhaps.'

'The conservatory, at that part, is twenty or twenty-five feet high,' said Adams, mildly throwing a glance up at the ceiling of the hall—'much higher than this roof. If something four pounds' weight fell from this ceiling, would it seriously injure a skull?'

'Bless me, man! if it hit the cranium perpendicularly, it would crack it like an egg-shell.'

'Then the wood must have struck somewhere else first,' summed up Adams.

'I hope you have no reason for thinking there is any other explanation of the affair?' asked the doctor, looking rather keenly at his companion.

'Certainly not; only one cannot help wondering.'

'Take my advice, and give over wondering about it,' said the doctor, putting on his hat. 'Very luckily, it is not so bad as it might have been; and everybody—Sir Mark like the rest—agrees it must have been an accident. It is of no use unsettling our own minds, or anybody else's, by mere theorising about it.—Thank you for taking the trouble to see about my horse; it is at the door, I hear.—Good-morning, Mr Adams.' Dr Morris was going to ride over to the town, and return; a minute later, his horse cantered away. After a short pause, Adams also went into the open air.

'He has not seen the spot,' the pale-faced secretary soliloquised, crossing by the front of the Lodge; 'but I have, and there are neither trailing-plants to break its fall, nor side-partitions, nor anything else that the wood could first hit. The blow was struck by some one—not given accidentally. I thought doctors understood Latin—*cui bono*? I must find out where Mr Walter Dayton was when it happened.' Mr Adams, chuckling to himself, turned the angle of the Lodge.

Walter Dayton, it may be stated, had been most assiduous in his attendance upon his uncle since the occurrence; he did not quit the baronet's chamber for a moment until he was pronounced out of danger, and since then he had passed nearly the whole time in the ante-chamber. What, under such circumstances, the thoughts of the heir of Sir Mark were likely to be, we will not guess; but neither in word, look, nor manner did Walter Dayton shew the least sign of any consciousness of guilt. Adams could not well make his way into the sick-chamber to cross-examine the young gentleman, so he had to cast about for other means of getting at what he wanted to know. Some of the specially invited visitors to the festivities, residing considerable distances away, had remained at the Lodge to sleep; most likely, but for this untoward event, they would have stayed for some time longer. As it was, the greater part of them left early that morning; several, however, still remained. Two or three of the gentlemen were smoking their cigars on the peach-tree lawn; and it was in that direction Adams turned his steps.

'It spoiled the ball sadly,' said a tall gentleman, with whom the secretary soon got into talk. 'But the great news is that it isn't so bad as was thought.'

'How far had you got in the list of dances' and

Adams produced from his pocket a programme of them.

'We were dancing this waltz,' answered the other, pointing to the card with his cigar-end—'had got almost to the end, when the servant who found Sir Mark, screamed.'

'It is to be hoped he had not lain there long without being attended to. That would be shocking.'

'He could hardly have been there any time. Between the dances, the conservatory was always crowded. If it had happened ten minutes earlier, plenty of persons would have seen it done.—But stop, we can settle that point.—Wallace, come here a moment.' This was addressed to a second male visitor, who, a short distance away, was leaning on the stone balustrade, smoking meditatively.

'I have,' he said, leisurely approaching, 'been thinking over what I, if I were Sir Mark, should do with the carpenters. I should not be satisfied if the foreman wasn't hung; he ought to have seen that the place was left safe. With the common workmen, I would be lenient; I would only have them on the tread-mill for a year or two, with large pieces of wood tumbling about their ears.'

'I should rather be the foreman, then, and get it over at once. But it was scandalous—no thanks to them he wasn't killed outright. You,' went on the speaker, 'can settle a point this gentleman has raised.'

'I was away from the Lodge,' put in Adams, his face colouring a little, 'and this morning I have been learning what particulars I could. It occurred to me whether Sir Mark was long lying there before he was found.'

'No,' decisively answered the other. 'I happened to see him myself not ten minutes before the affair. I was not dancing then, and I noticed him come out of the conservatory, and go towards the ball-room door, where he spoke to those two elderly females who were always at the elbow of the beautiful Miss Eddowes. An envious old lady of my acquaintance,' briskly added the narrator, 'told me they are cottage-farmers somewhere on the estate, and pick up a decent living by keeping pigs and poultry, eking it out with a small dairy, which, it is suspected, Miss Eddowes attends to.'

'Wallace, you would not mind being the plough-boy on that farm!'

'I think you were a bit smitten too,' retorted the other.

'Sir Mark, then, would return into the conservatory after that?' asked Adams, when the two friends had concluded a slight fencing-bout with their cigars.

'I beg your pardon. The two females, after Sir Mark had spoken with them, crossed over to the conservatory. Several people detained Sir Mark, but he didn't seem in a talking humour; and, directly, I saw him saunter back into the conservatory. It certainly was not more than five or six minutes before the servant found him, which was just as the dance was finishing.'

'Thank you. It is a relief to know Sir Mark was not lying there unheeded, when everybody else were enjoying themselves.' As he made this Christian observation, Adams looked quite cheerful at the point having been cleared up.

'By the by,' resumed the previous speaker, 'I remember thinking Sir Mark, with his usual luck, must have had a chat with the new beauty; she had entered the conservatory not long before. I

fancied he brought some message from her to the two old women. I suppose they all went home together by the other door.'

'Was not she in your last dance?' gaily inquired Adams. 'That would be a disappointment to somebody; perhaps, from what I hear, to Mr Walter Dayton. They say he was the fortunate man in often securing her hand. He would not be dancing at the time this happened?' Adams's bright eyes waited anxiously for the answer.

'O yes, he was,' replied the first gentleman. 'Dayton and the Dean's red-headed girl stood up next to me in that dance. He turned as white as a figure when he heard the news.'

'If the blow on the uncle's head had been a little heavier, it would have knocked the nephew into the possession of the property.' All three laughed at this remark, Adams very hollowly; and he sauntered away from his companions of the moment. He had extracted from them what he wanted. Slowly he walked on, his face much puzzled, thinking the matter out.

He had nearly gained the Lodge entrance, when a footman, his gorgeous livery a little tossed and rumpled (all the domestics having been up during the night), came hurrying out. 'Sir Mark wishes for you, Mr Adams. He asked for the inkstand and paper; so, perhaps it is for some writing.'

Adams hastened through the hall and up the staircase, passing through several rooms where servants and others were moving silently about, until he reached the ante-room of the sick-chamber.

'Sir Mark wants a note written,' said Mr Walter Dayton, coming forward. 'Something that you know of, perhaps, for I offered to do it. Keep about a little nearer, Adams.' Adams's keen glance flashed at receiving orders from this quarter, but, without making any reply, he passed into the other room, which was darkened by the half-drawn curtains.

'What a time you are!' began the sick man, supported in the bed upon pillows. He looked very pale and weakly, and also very strange, owing to the bandages tied around his head. 'There is the ink,' he went on feebly, pointing to the small table beside the bed. 'Write a note to Mrs Dunstan—you know them, at Elm Cottage; ask her to come here in the evening, if she pleases. Say I cannot call because of a slight—under-score that—a slight accident.'—Adams was not long in doing this.—'Send it at once. Sign it; I am faint. Let the butler go down with the note and explain; for I daresay they will have heard something. Say it was just after they left me, and it is only slight.'

'Shall I go myself?' asked Adams.

'No, no,' was the impatient answer. 'You must not go near. The butler, I said. Tell him to make as light of it as possible.' The secretary had gained the door when his master's low voice again arrested him. 'Send,' he added in a curious tone, 'the best bouquet the gardener can find, with my compliments. Give orders that Mrs Dunstan is to be admitted with—anybody else that may come with her.' He turned uneasily among the pillows on the bed, and Adams, who had a sneer upon his white face, passed out.

'Some business matter, Adams, I suppose?' asked Walter Dayton in the ante-room. 'The doctors say he must not worry himself.'

'Business! More like pleasure, some would say,' triumphantly sneered Adams. 'It is a note for

Mrs Dunstan down in the village;' and he shewed the missive. 'I am to send along with it the best bouquet that can be got—that, I suppose, is for Miss Eddowes!'

Walter Dayton, his countenance growing very pale, instantly turned away without any remark.

'It wasn't that fool who did it,' muttered Adams, descending the stairs: 'he hasn't the writs for it; they are only equal to the cut of wristbands and the fastening of neck-ties.—Whe—w!' he whistled a moment afterwards, checking himself so suddenly that his foot slipped, and he nearly stumbled forwards.—'Whe—w!' he repeated, his face flashing out into a smile. 'That curious woman's birds were in the conservatory, with that half-witted fellow who lives with her to watch them.' Mr Adams moved on very slowly towards the butler's pantry.

There were strange feelings at Elm Cottage. Not that they had heard anything of Sir Mark's condition. The village, indeed, was astir with the news; but the occupants of that one cottage, in their excited state, kept themselves secluded. Both aunts had again dressed themselves in their best silks, and sat in the parlour awaiting their grand visitor. Mrs Dunstan was very silent, gazing, with a face of wonder, into the fire, and now and then shaking herself up, as if just awaking. Aunt Milly gossiped away by fits and starts, the fact of her getting no answers to her remarks making very little difference. Whenever Lucy accosted her, she would in her replies persist in addressing her as 'Lady;' and once or twice, when she happened to be standing, she made her low courtesies. It was in vain Lucy protested, which she did, no matter whether or not her vanity was gratified—the old lady accepted the chiding most respectfully, as if she had looked for it, and then she went down still lower the next time. Lucy herself was taciturn, but very restless, and nearly divided her time between walking in the back-garden and standing dreamily in her own bedroom, looking down on a broken diamond cross, of which neither of her aunts knew anything. She was greatly puzzled by Mrs Leighton and her strange conduct in the conservatory.

All three were startled, much disappointed, and also perplexed, when the old butler from the Lodge, who himself seemed embarrassed, brought the note for Mrs Dunstan and the astonishing account of the baronet's mishap. From his relation, it, however, seemed purely an accident—a fragment of the conservatory roof, he said, had fallen, and had grazed Sir Mark in doing so. Had he stated the affair in his own way, and not as Mr Adams had impressively instructed him, he would most probably have announced, that Sir Mark was found lying in a pool of blood, with a bludgeon near him; then Lucy, there is little doubt, would instantly, as we have seen Adams, after other inquiries, do—have connected the occurrence in some way with Mrs Leighton. The production of the splendid bouquet which accompanied the note, and which all well understood was meant for Lucy, was also a momentary distraction; and so, although they were greatly surprised by the news, they did not regard it as very alarming. Mr Butler was quite overwhelmed with thanks, as that highly respectable person took his leave.

A grave discussion now arose as to whether Mrs Dunstan should go to the Lodge alone, or if it

would be proper for Lucy to accompany her. And while Aunt Milly voted that the maiden herself should instantly repair alone to the Lodge, the beauty shrugged her shoulders, as she bent above the lovely bouquet. After wearisome debate, it was finally agreed that they should all three go!—Mrs Dunstan to present herself alone at the Lodge, and Lucy and Aunt Milly to remain in the grounds, where they would be on the spot to act according to Mrs Dunstan's report of Sir Mark's condition and wishes. And so it was arranged.

A WINTER-DAY AT HAWORTH.

GREAT bare hills sloping upwards on every side; long vistas between them, closed at length by other hills rising to a still greater height than those near at hand; here and there a farm-building standing out cold and lonely upon the barren fell; close at our feet a great street of houses, narrow as Chancery Lane, and running up the side of a hill steep as the roof of a house; hardly a tree to be seen in any direction, but all the landscape wrapped in a dazzling mantle of snow, whilst overhead is a leaden January sky: this was what I saw when I stood looking down at Haworth, during the early days of last year. A wild and gloomy scene it was, suited so well to the memories which the place called up, that it almost seemed as though the spot were in perpetual mourning for her who was gone, and whose home and resting-place I had come so far to see.

I cannot try to picture it so vividly as to bring it before my readers' eyes. Mrs Gaskell tried to do it, and failed. Charlotte Brontë herself has painted little bits of the scenery with the hand of a master, but even she was never able to reproduce it as a whole, in all its gloom, and sadness, and grandeur. It is enough to say, that upon anything more cheerless the eye could hardly rest. The little nook amongst the great hills might have been a corner of a desert land in which a lonely colony of adventurers had scooped out a home; and yet it is within four miles of a railway station, and in the midst of the great West Riding of Yorkshire!

I was standing at the head of a steep descent when I got this my first peep at Haworth. The road at my feet ran down the hill to a little stone-bridge, crossed it, and then began to climb the hill that rose directly in front of me. But just at the point where it left the bridge, it suddenly became no longer a country road, passing between scanty fields and barren pieces of moorland, but a steep and crowded street. The houses, strangely unequal in size, but all alike in the bareness and vulgarity of their architecture, were crowded together as compactly as though the land on which they were built was in the heart of London, instead of on the side of a Yorkshire hill. From where I looked down upon them, the opposite sides of the way seemed so near as scarcely to leave room for a foot-passenger, and the street rose at such an angle that it seemed impossible that any animal less surefooted than a mule could traverse

it. Right up to the top of the fell, the quaint rambling village extended, and at the top, standing a little apart from the houses, there was an old church, beyond which—still nearer to the background of snow-clad moorland—I could just discern the chimneys and roof of a humble dwelling of world-wide fame—the Haworth parsonage.

There was little life visible in the village itself as I toiled up the steep flagged street. Many of the houses were closed. Hard times, such as we read of in *Shirley*, had come upon the people. The mills were silent, and the active 'hands' had sought employment elsewhere; so, scarcely a woman or child came out to watch me as I went up the road that led to Charlotte Brontë's home. But it needed not the presence of the children and gossips of the village to people it; for the whole place seemed haunted with the faces and forms of those to whom this 'long, unlovely street' had once been so familiar. There was Charlotte Brontë herself—'a little woman, plainly dressed, and with nothing particular to notice in her appearance,' setting off bravely on a long walk to Keighley for the books which awaited her at the circulating library. There was Emily, with masculine gait, striding down towards the brook, followed by the dogs she loved so well. There was Anne, gentle and timid—the loveliest of them all,' says one who knew them well—passing from house to house amongst the parishioners, with a kind word and a sweet smile for every one. There was poor Patrick—the 'genius' of the family, as his sisters believed—lounging about this very spot, during the last days of a mis-spent life. How easy it was to conjure up such visions as these, now that I had reached the very home of this the most extraordinary family that ever dwelt together under a single roof. It was by this road that Charlotte and Anne walked to Keighley when they were on their way to London, to satisfy their publisher that Currer and Acton Bell were not the same person, and that *Jane Eyre* and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* really were the productions of two distinct writers; and over this road have come since then thousands of pilgrims to a shrine, about which, in the eyes of the rude villagers, there is nothing that is sacred. Thackeray, Emerson, Hawthorne, Miss Martineau, Mrs Gaskell, and a host of men and women of world-wide fame, have trod the steep and winding street, to visit the parson's daughters in their humble home; and their sad but wonderful story has since their death drawn visitors to Haworth from every quarter of the globe.

With memories such as these around me, it suited my mood better to see the street silent and empty, than if I had found it full of life and bustle. The sleepy shops with closed doors presented nothing to attract attention until I reached the post-office; but here I found that provision had been made for the gratification of the relic-hunter. In the window were copies of all the works of the Brontë family, and photographs of old Mr Brontë and Haworth Church. Just above the post-office, there is a little open space in the street,

the houses opening out on either side. Here is the entrance to the church, and here, divided from it only by a narrow strip of graveyard, is the *Black Bull*, a public-house, which will be remembered by all the readers of Mrs Gaskell's *Life of Charlotte Brontë*. It was to the church that I first turned my steps, but hardly had I got within the gates of the enclosure within which it stands, than I found that my coming had been noticed. A ruddy-faced, good-tempered Yorkshireman mysteriously made his appearance by my side, and in a very short space of time had acquainted me with the fact that he was the sexton of the church; whilst a little questioning brought out the further circumstance, that he was the son of the man who had held that post in the time of the Brontës, and that he had himself intimately known the whole of the family.

The church, to which I was forthwith admitted, claims to be one of the oldest places of worship in the country. It is dedicated to some obscure saint unknown, save to the most devoted student of hagiology, and it makes absurd pretensions to a fabulous antiquity. Mrs Gaskell says of that part of the building in which service is conducted—the vestry and tower only being left of the ancient portion—that it is neither new enough nor old enough to be interesting. There, however, I must venture to differ from her judgment. It is a curious little place of the 'three-decker' period of ecclesiastical architecture, and filled with great square pews, the ugliness of which it would be hard to surpass. That which first strikes the stranger's eye as he looks around the building, is the manner in which these same pews are inscribed with the names of their owners; for nearly all belong to farmers in the neighbourhood, and as you pass along the aisle you see such inscriptions as, 'The Pew of Thomas Carrodus, June the 4th 1801,' emblazoned in letters of gold upon the deal partitions. At one side, rising up one above the other, are the clerk's desk, the reading-desk, and the pulpit, from which the father and the husband of Charlotte Brontë have often preached; and at the end of the building is the altar, a small railed-in communion pew, almost hidden beneath the low gallery. In front of this it was that Charlotte Brontë stood on the summer morning on which she gave herself in marriage to Mr Nicholls, the curate of Haworth, who had won her by a service almost as long and as faithful as that by which Jacob gained his beloved Rachel. And in front of this same altar, within a step of the very spot on which she stood on that bright July morning, her mortal remains now lie. A flat stone, the inscription on which is hidden beneath the cocoa-nut matting, covers her tomb; but though the place be humble and remote, it would have been difficult to find any which would have been better suited to her sad life-story. In the wall of the church, above the altar, is a white marble slab, covered with such a record of death's doings as could be found in no smaller space within the three kingdoms. It is the family monument of the Brontës, and it tells, in the simplest language, the story of the birth and death of each of the six children of Mr Brontë and his wife, the last name on the list being that of the old man himself, who, having seen all his children perish, and having lived to become famous through the genius of some of them, died at a ripe old age, some five years ago. Close to the altar is a little square pew, with faded green-baize cushions—the

pew which was formerly occupied by the Brontës. 'And this,' says my conductor, 'was Miss Charlotte's corner.' The pew is just as it was left by her the last time she worshipped in it, save that the stool she used to stand upon, when the congregation rose to sing, has been removed. A more unpretending spot in which to worship it would be impossible to conceive; and its like may be seen at any time in hundreds of the more ancient dissenting chapels in the country. And yet in this pew, on one Sunday morning which my guide can recall to mind, there worshipped with the villagers four persons, the fame of some of whom may live as long as the English language endures—Charlotte Brontë, Harriet Martineau, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Thackeray. One would have liked to have been a member of the congregation that morning, and to have seen this remarkable gathering of genius in so remote and obscure a spot. But the glory of the pew has passed away. No longer do the villagers look down from the galleries upon the little short-sighted lady, seated in the corner, who had occupied that place from childhood. The pew is in the possession now of a rustic church-warden and his family, and their predecessors have utterly vanished from the face of the earth. Not one of the large family which, twenty years ago, filled the parsonage-house and the parsonage-pew, is left to perpetuate the name; and even here, their memory is beginning to fade away, and a new race of worshippers to arise, who know even less about them than the outside world.

Standing beside Charlotte's last resting-place, I questioned my conductor respecting her, and found him at once ready and willing to oblige me with all the information in his possession. 'He had been but a little boy,' he said, 'when all the family were living, but he remembered the three sisters well, and had often run errands for Mr Patrick. They used to take a great deal of notice of him when he was little; but Miss Annie was his favourite, perhaps because she always paid him so much attention. Baking-day never came round at the parsonage without her remembering to make a little cake or dumpling for him, and she seldom met him without having something good and sweet to bestow upon him.—Yes, they were a very reserved family, and very peculiar in their habits. The villagers did not see much of them, except on Sundays; and of course nobody knew that the young ladies were writing books, or that they had become famous, until, long after, strange people had begun to come from a distance to see them. And then the letters! What a heap of letters were always brought to the parsonage in those days by the postman!—Miss Emily, who is buried here, beside Charlotte, was the strangest of all the family; nobody thought so much of Miss Charlotte herself. Emily never came down into the village, or at least very rarely; but there, through the window, I might see the path by which she used always to go from the parsonage to the moors. Hundreds of times, when he was a boy, he had watched her go through the stile yonder, followed by her dogs. No matter what the weather was, she loved the moors so much that she must go out upon them, and enjoy the fresh breezes. When she went away from Haworth to become a governess, she was taken very ill, and sickened until she was brought home again, and then she very soon recovered. She loved the moors so much, that it would have been a sad thing if she had been

buried away from them. Of course I had read about her in Mrs Gaskell's book, and the way in which she refused to see a doctor until an hour or two before she died.—About Miss Charlotte, he could not tell so much, she was so very reserved; but he remembered seeing her stand, just where he was standing now, that morning that she was married.—To his mind, Mr Branwell was the cleverest of the family. A wonderful talker he was, and able to do things which nobody he had ever seen before could do. He had seen Branwell sitting in the vestry, talking to his (the sexton's) father, and writing two different letters at the same time. He could take a pen in each hand, and write a letter with each at once. He had seen him do that many times, and had afterwards read the letters written in that way.—Yes; it was true that he came to a sad end, but Mrs Gaskell had not stated the case about him correctly. Haworth people did not like Mrs Gaskell at all. There was a deal of feeling against her for what she had said about Mr Branwell, and the villagers encouraging him to drink. Mrs Gaskell said that he had learned to drink when he was a boy, and had gone on gradually strengthening the habit; but that was not true. When he was nineteen years old, he was secretary to a temperance society in the village, and it was not until after that that he learned to drink. It was not correct that the landlord of the *Bull* had had anything to do with teaching him, though it was quite true that he used to sit in the back-parlour there and drink almost constantly of an evening when he was older. But if he could not have got drink there, he would have been sure to have got it somewhere else. But oh, he was a fine fellow, Branwell; and such a talker! Ay, and when he was at the worst, he never missed coming to the Sunday-school with his sisters. They all used to come regularly. He remembered Mr Branwell's funeral, and Miss Emily's funeral; and of course he remembered Miss Charlotte's and Mr Brontë's.—A strange old gentleman was Mr Brontë.—Mr Nicholls, who married Miss Charlotte, was very well liked by the people. A true gentleman he was, though very shy and reserved; but how could he help being that, when he had lived so long with such a family? When Mr Brontë died, he "put in" for the place; but when he found there was likely to be opposition, he withdrew, and now he was living in Ireland again, where he had married a second wife.

With such pleasant garrulousness did my companion entertain me, even whilst I stood beside the grave in which, 'life's fitful fever' o'er, the bones of Charlotte Brontë rest. Then, with a last look at the quaint old church, at the altar, at the pew, and at 'Charlotte's corner,' we turned away together, and passed into the vestry.

Here, my guide—who first, however, detained me to look at some ancient inscriptions on the wall of the tower, which I did not care to see—produced the marriage-register of the place, and opening it at a well-thumbed page, shewed me the tremulous writing in which Charlotte Brontë signed her maiden name for the last time. The witnesses of the marriage were 'Ellen Nussey' and 'Margaret Wooler,' who will be recognised by readers of Mrs Gaskell's book as Charlotte's two most intimate friends: the former her beloved school-fellow, companion, and correspondent, the 'E. N.' of the Memoir; and the latter, the 'Miss W.,' who was so kind a friend and schoolmistress. The house of

Miss Nussey is still at Birstall, a small town near Leeds, where the scene of *Shirley* is laid. It was here that Miss Brontë corrected the proof-sheets of *Jane Eyre*, and here that she spent some of the happiest hours of her life. It was in Birstall, too, that she found the principal characters, as well as the scene and the incidents, of *Shirley*. Mr Yorke of the novel is identical with a well-known resident in the village, with whose daughters—the 'T.'s' of Mrs Gaskell's work—Charlotte was on the most intimate terms; her friend Miss Nussey is the original of Caroline Helstone; whilst the model from which she drew Shirley herself was her own sister Emily. Let me make a brief digression here to illustrate one of the chief peculiarities of her character—the reserve which induced her to make a mystery, even to her most intimate friends, of her labours as an author. When she was at Scarborough, after the death of her sister Anne, a lady with whom she was intimate, and who is still living, was in the habit of taking her out in her carriage for long drives. The lady came from Birstall, and was intimate with Charlotte's friends there. One day, talking about them, she remarked that Mr T. would make an admirable character in a novel. 'Dear me, do you really think so?' was the reply, given with the most innocent appearance of surprise, by Charlotte. And yet at that very time *Shirley* was nearly completed, and 'Mr T.' was hit off to the life in its pages as Mr Yorke.

Another book, very different to the greasy marriage-register, was produced by my guide before I left the vestry: it was the visitors' book, and contained already thousands of names. During the summer months, Haworth is visited almost daily by persons anxious to see the home of the Brontës, and it will not perhaps surprise those of my readers who know anything of the state of things at Stratford and Abbotsford, to learn that a large number of these visitors are Americans. Amongst them also are many tourists from different parts of the continent; for the works of the Brontës have been translated into most European languages, and are eagerly read and fully appreciated abroad. Last year, amongst the visitors to Haworth was a large party of artists from Rome, composed, I was told, of American ladies and Italian gentlemen. They stayed two days at the village inn, sketching the church, the parsonage-house, and the waterfall on the moors, which was one of Charlotte's favourite haunts; and from here they went to Birstall, where they also made themselves thoroughly acquainted with all the places in any degree connected with the object of their worship.

It was but a step from the vestry to the churchyard, behind which, and looking straight down upon the north end of the church, is the parsonage itself. I came out into the snow-covered burial-ground, and looked eagerly towards the parsonage; but here a great disappointment awaited me. The house, which those who have read Mrs Gaskell's work must know so well, and of which so many engravings have been published, has lost much of its peculiarity in the hands of its present possessors. The stone-roof has made way for one of slate, and the old windows have been removed, and great sheets of plate-glass—better suited, one would think, for Belgravia than a house in the midst of the Yorkshire moors—have replaced them. The result has been the transformation of the old parsonage into an exceedingly common-place dwelling

of modern appearance, and some pretensions to 'gentility.' One thing, however, pleased me, and that was to see, that whilst the rest of the house was occupied, a room on one side of the doorway was closed. This was the room specially associated with the memory of those for whose sake the place is sacred. Here it was that, when they were mere children, the three sisters occupied themselves in writing the wonderful little magazines which they edited for their mutual benefit, and in taxing their wits in the composition of somewhat juvenile pieces of poetry. Here it was that, in later years, *Jane Eyre*, *Wuthering Heights*, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, and indeed all the works which have made them famous, were composed and transcribed. Mrs Gaskell tells us how the three sisters, in the long winter evenings, in that lonely house, used to roam about the apartment, talking to each other of the plots of their different stories, making suggestions, revisions, criticisms—Emily pausing to caress her dogs, and Charlotte to strain her eyes out of the window to where the dark and weather-stained church tower rose from the nettles of the graveyard; whilst the gentler Anne found some more congenial domestic occupation. Here, in later years, when two of the sisters were gone, the third, left alone solitary in the midst of her fame, used to pace about the room, thinking sadly of the vanished faces, and the voices that would never more be heard; and catching, perhaps, in the gloom some dim foreshadowing of her own destiny. On the other side of the narrow entrance-hall was the room where her father used to sit, brooding over the reverses of his life, chiefly over the miserable fate of the son whom he had loved before all other earthly beings. The house is full now of a new life. 'Gone are the old familiar faces;' the voices of strangers and the prattle of children sound through the rooms; and nothing is left about the humble dwelling-place to speak about those who have departed. The present occupants of the house have been compelled to refuse admittance to strangers, anxious to see the home of the Brontës: so many came, that their own comfort was seriously interfered with. Last year, however, when the American ladies of whom I have already spoken were at Haworth, they broke through all such regulations in their national appetite for sight-seeing, and gained an entrance almost by force to the house where Charlotte Brontë had lived, and worked, and died.

Looking at the place from the graveyard, the visitor cannot see much. There is a little square garden in front of the house, separated from the churchyard by a low wall; but only the hardiest shrubs grow in it; and the luxuriant foliage which flourishes in one or two of the pictures of the place I have seen, has never had an existence, save in the imagination of the artist. The climate is too cold, the soil too poor to permit of the cultivation of any extensive collection of flowers or plants. Up at that great height above the sea, summer has not many beauties; and it is not until autumn has dyed the great moors and hills in the richest purple tints, that the visitor sees that the place can sometimes look other than bare and bleak. When I saw the garden, the snows of last January covered it, and the little plot was hardly less dismal in appearance than the hills which filled the horizon on every side. Just separated from the garden by the low wall I have mentioned,

is the grave of 'Tabby,' the faithful servant who nursed the Brontës when they were children, and who died so short a time before Charlotte. A stone was placed over her grave by the affection of her mistress; but unfortunately I could not see it, for the work of burying is still going on; and on the day when I visited the place, the earth from a newly-made grave covered the humble memorial. At the rear, the house is still left untouched; but all that the passer-by can see, without being impertinent in his scrutiny, is the roof and window of the kitchen where the three sisters used to help Tabby with her household work, and where, on one occasion, Emily performed a feat of cool courage which has been recorded in the pages of *Shirley*. One hot summer's day, a dog, evidently suffering from some peculiar malady, entered the little yard at the back of the parsonage, and Emily, always kind to the brute creation, took pity upon it, and brought it water to drink. But the ungrateful animal returned her kindness by snapping at her hand, and inflicting a wound, which the condition of the dog made peculiarly dangerous. Without a moment's hesitation, the brave girl ran into the kitchen, and heating an iron, deliberately cauterised the place before she told any one of the injury she had received. Behind this kitchen, where the sisters passed some of their happiest hours, an ill-cultivated field stretches up to where the moors begin; for the parsonage is the last house that you pass before you enter upon the dreary region of heath and gorse that lies between Haworth and Burnley, nearly twenty miles away.

The winter afternoon was far advanced as I and the friend who had accompanied me turned our backs upon the parsonage, and entering a narrow path between two low stone-walls or dikes, made the best of our way towards the moors. This was the path which the sisters used when they went out upon these same moors—the moors, to which, it is no exaggeration to say, they were indebted for so many of the peculiar features of their characters. Wild and dreary beyond the power of words to describe, was the scene that presented itself to us as we toiled on through the snow up the narrow lane to the last stile—a stile which must have presented difficulties to ladies even before the days of crinoline—and passing through it, entered the great region of moorland itself. Yet bleak and cheerless as the scene was, there was something in it so novel, that, at first, at any rate, it exhilarated rather than depressed the spirits; and as we plunged into the great ocean of snow, and directed our steps towards a long plateau of table-land, from which it seemed likely we should be able to obtain a wide prospect over the whole district, we thought joyfully of the contrast between the wild scene around us and the muddy streets of London, which we had left so lately, and to which one of us at least was about to return. In the hard fight we had with the snow, we almost for a time forgot the special object of our pilgrimage, and ceased to think of Charlotte Brontë and her home, as we sank, now knee-deep, and now up to the middle, in the crisp and unstained snow. At last, however, we gained the base of the table-land. A sharp scramble soon brought us to the top, only to find, however, that we must rise higher yet before we could command the prospect we were seeking. Another quarter of an hour spent pleasantly in the struggle, brought us at length, tired and perspiring, to the topmost level of the plateau;

and then we looked around upon a scene which more than repaid us for our labour. Right before us ran a strip of moorland, crowning a long ridge of 'fell,' and running, far as the eye could reach, towards the west. The strip of moorland itself did not seem to be more than a couple of miles in width, but scarcely less wild were the tracts of land sloping down from it into the valleys on either side. It is true that they were divided into fields of enormous dimensions by the stone dikes peculiar to the district; but in hardly any instance did there seem to have been the smallest attempt at cultivation. I looked in vain for hamlet or village. Here and there, a solitary house stood out black against the background of snow, but no other sign of the presence of man could be detected. The silence of the everlasting hills brooded over the spot, and a strange, weird, inexpressible influence possessed the mind of the man who gazed long upon the scene. There was literally the stillness of death over the landscape. However keenly we might look, no living figure could we see moving across the great waste; and however attentively we might listen, no sound save the rush of the wind smote upon the ear. Here and there, nestling down in one of the valleys that ran out in all directions before us, we might see a cottage, from the chimney of which a thin wreath of smoke was curling slowly up; but even the houses seemed to be deserted. The sky, save in the far east, where the gray of the early winter evening was beginning to creep up from the horizon, was empty; the tiny streams which, in summer, give some animation to the spot, were spell-bound by the frost, and a sense of something awful and oppressive seemed to hover over the great wilderness.

And this spot where we now stood was Charlotte Brontë's favourite haunt. Here she used to come in girlhood and in womanhood, and unconsciously drink in all the influences of the scene, just as the leaves of our trees unconsciously drink in the sunshine that is poured upon them in the months of summer. And then, in the gray stone house we had left behind us, those same influences were made to live again in the passion and sentiment with which she endowed the creatures of her genius. Thousands of times has she walked over this strip of moorland, with her face turned bravely, in the heaviest gales of winter, towards the west, for two miles away from where I stood was the little waterfall—known now as Brontë's Falls—which was one of her favourite places of resort, and to which she constantly repaired. Here she came with her sisters and her friends in her early years, and here—when there was light in the eventide of her brief day—during the few short months of her happy married life, she has often come with the husband she loved. But hither she will come no more. Thinking of this, and with other thoughts, which I find no words to express here, I turned sadly away; saw the gray tower of the old church and the roof of the parsonage below me, and came back slowly to the village, feeling all the time as though I were walking in some haunted chamber, surrounded by the faces and voices of the dead.

There was a bright fire and a hearty Yorkshire welcome awaiting us at the *Black Bull*; and here, in a little room that seemed to have been left untouched by time for half a century at least, we dined plainly but comfortably. In the chimney-

corner stood an old chair of a peculiar fashion, and the landlady coming in after dinner, told us that that was 'Mr Branwell's chair,' where he always used to sit of an evening when he came down from the parsonage. Then the light reckoning paid, and a last word said to the friendly sexton who met us at the door, we took a long, lingering look at the parsonage, the church, and the road by which we had gone up to the moors, and then set off upon our four miles' walk to Keighley Station.

WHAT IS GENIUS?

Talent, lying in the understanding, is often inherited; genius being the union of reason and imagination, rarely or never.—COLERIDGE.

WHAT is Genius?—'Tis a gem
In a favoured few enshrined;
By its brightness, shewing them
Things beyond the common mind.

'Tis a planet, grand, but strange,
With a motion unexplained,
And an elevated range,
Only by itself attained.

'Tis a clear, perceptive tact,
With a power which patience earns,
To elaborate into act
What the intellect discerns.

'Tis a flash that comes unsought;
Vivid, self-revealed, intense;
'Tis the ethereal glance of thought—
A divine intelligence.

'Tis an intellectual dower,
Which the mind for years may hold,
Ere the genial quickening hour
Bid its energies unfold.

But, while all the gift admire,
To the breast wherein it glows,
'Tis a fierce volcanic fire,
That allows of rare repose.

Feelings keenly sensitive,
Oft to very anguish stung,
Still a sad distinction give
To the soul by Genius strung.

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